

Message Text

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21

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AF-10 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 OMB-01 SAJ-01 NIC-01 SAM-01 DRC-01

/105 W

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R 050450Z SEP 74

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2086

INFO USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

AMEMBASSY LOME

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CH

SUBJECT: DIFFERENT ARRANGEMENT FOR MAO MEETING WITH TOGOLESE
PRESIDENT

REF: A. HONG KONG 9798; B. HONG KONG 8610

SUMMARY. THE ABSENCE OF WANG HUNG-WEN AS WELL AS AILING PREMIER
CHOU FROM MAO'S MEETING WITH THE TOGOLESE VICE PRESIDENT SUGGESTS
THAT THE REGIME WISHES TO AVOID SPECULATION THAT WANG HAS
REPLACED CHOU IN THE PARTY AND PARTY-STATE LINEUP. END SUMMARY.

1. CHOU EN-LAI'S ABSENCE FROM MAO'S SEPTEMBER 4 MEETING WITH
THE TOGOLESE PRESIDENT MARKS A FURTHER STEP AWAY FROM CENTER-
STAGE FOR THE AGING AND AILING PREMIER. IT CONTINUES THE
PROGRESSIVE MOVES BEGUN THIS SPRING TO EASE CHOU OUT OF HIS
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HIGHLY ACTIVE AND VISIBLE ROLE AS THE REGIME'S FOREMOST PUBLIC

FIGURE.

2. HEALTH IS THE OFFICIAL EXPLANATION, AS INDICATED BY THE TOGOLESE PRESIDENT'S EARLIER BANQUET TOAST IN WHICH HE WISHED CHOU "A SPEEDY RECOVERY." IF HEALTH IS THE WHOLE EXPLANATION, AND WE CONTINUE TO HAVE RESERVATIONS ABOUT THAT, THEN IT WOULD APPEAR THAT CHOU'S CONDITION HAS NOT IMPROVED AND MAY EVEN HAVE WORSENERED. HE WAS ABLE TO RECEIVE SENATOR JACKSON AND THE VICE PRESIDENT OF NIGER IN JULY AND TO ATTEND THE ARMY DAY RECEPTION AUGUST 1.

3. THE REGIME EARLIER PREPARED OPINION FOR CHOU'S ABSENCE FROM THIS MEETING BY THE REPEATED REFERENCES TO HIS AUTHORITY, AND TO VICE PREMIER TENG HSIAO-PING AS ACTING ON CHOU'S BEHALF, IN WELCOMING THE TOGOLESE (REF A). CLEARLY PEKING EXPECTS SPECULATION THAT CHOU IS ON HIS WAY OUT AND WISHES TO CURB THIS AND TO SOFTEN THE IMPACT ON THOSE WHO LOOK TO CHOU AS THE STABLIZING, MODERATE, AND PRAGMATIC INFLUENCE WITHIN THE REGIME.

4. IT IS FROM THIS PERSPECTIVE OF REGIME CONCERN FOR SPECULATION THAT WE ARE INCLINED TO SPECULATE ABOUT THE OTHER CONSPICUOUS ABSENTEE FROM THE MAO MEETING, YOUNG PARTY VICE CHAIRMAN WANG HUNG-WEN. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME SINCE HE STARTED JOINING MAO AND CHOU IN SUCH MEETINGS LAST YEAR (12 IN ALL) THAT WANG HAS NOT BEEN PRESENT WHEN A CHIEF OF STATE CALLED. WANG, OF COURSE, COULD BE ILL OR AWAY ON SOME MORE IMPORTANT AFFAIR. BUT ONE EFFECT OF HIS ABSENCE IS TO OFFSET CHOU'S, AND TO PRECLUDE GIVING A SIGNAL THAT CHOU HAS BEEN REPLACED AS NEXT AFTER MAO IN THE PARTY HIERARCHY. THE ARRANGEMENT SYMBOLICALLY, AS WE WOULD READ IT, IS THAT IN CHOU'S ABSENCE THE LINE OF AUTHORITY IN STATE AFFAIRS RUNS DIRECTLY FROM MAO TO CHOU'S STAND-IN AND CARETAKER VICE PREMIER TENG, AND THAT WANG IS NOT IN CHOU'S SHOES AT THIS TIME IN EITHER THE PARTY OR PARTY-STATE LINEUP (REF B).
CROSS

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